



## Learning on the Great Lakes Seaway Trail

*One of America's Byways*

### **Cultural Lesson #9**

**Subject: One room schoolhouse**

**Grade Level: 4 – 6**

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### **Anticipatory Set:**

What do you think school was like in the 1800's?

### **New York State Standards:**

**Social Studies:** Standard #1 - History of the United States and New York

**Language Arts:** Standard #1- Language for Information and understanding

Standard #2 - Language for Critical Analysis and Evaluation

**The Arts:** Standard #3 – Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art

Standard #4 – Understanding the Cultural Contributions of the Arts

### **Objective:**

Students will learn how schools have changed over the years by creating a Venn diagram and drawing a picture of a one-room schoolhouse and writing an essay that compares and contrasts the one-room schoolhouse to schools today. Students will also write the alphabet in cursive using ink pens (quill pens) and inkwells.

### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this lesson is help students understand how schools have developed over the years, pointing out how the school year was set up based on the farmer's harvesting schedule.

### **Summary:**

In the late 1800's schools were a lot different than what we have today. During the 1800's schools were generally one-room buildings with an outhouse. The building was heated with potbellied stove using coal or wood for fuel. The stove was generally in the center of the room. The classroom had the teacher's desk up front of the room usually on a platform and the student's desks were lined up in rows on either side of the stove. You would see an alphabet chart, a globe, couple of shelves or bookcases and a large blackboard behind the teacher's desk.

The teacher would start the day by getting the fire started in the potbellied stove. Students sometimes helped out with the chores like bringing in wood for the day. The grades ranged from first to eighth grade. Students were assigned their seats by either grade level or having girls on one side of the room and boys on the other. The teacher would assign work for the students to do independently. As the students worked the teacher would call up the students to the front of the room by grade level and would conduct a lesson as the other students worked on their own. One advantage to this way of teaching was the younger students could listen as the older students were being taught.

The one-room school taught the same subjects we teach today. They had great attentiveness towards "Reading", "Writing", and Arithmetic, much like we have today.



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Penmanship was also a very important subject to learn. The younger students used mostly slate boards with slate pencils, the older students were introduced to paper and ink pens.

The school year generally was divided into two terms. During the summer term older students would stay home to do farm chores. During the winter the older students would join the classroom. Discipline was strict. The students who misbehaved either had to sit in a corner or for greater offences get a “licking” where the teacher may use a hickory rod or a paddle. Students either walked or rode horses to school. Some students would go to school barefoot in the summer.

Today students walk or ride the bus to school. We have buildings containing several classrooms divided by grade level. There are some schools that have classrooms with two grades being combined. I student taught a 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade level classroom. Similar to the one-room school we gave the students an assignment for one grade level as we taught a lesson to the other grade level. You had to really manage your time by teaching your lesson and at the same time monitor the other students who were working independently.

One-room schoolhouses in small towns were being used until the 1940's and 50's. Most have been replaced with school districts combining small local schools to one location. Today you will find the Amish culture still using one-room schoolhouses. They teach their students up to grade 8.

### **Materials:**

1. The book “Me and My One-Room Schoolhouse”, by Rita Reber Carney (enough copies for the class to read.)
2. Have copies of the alphabet written in cursive.
3. Have ink pens (quill pens) and ink for students to write with.
4. Newspaper

### **Teach:**

1. Have the class read the book, “Me and My One-Room Schoolhouse”, together as a class.
2. Create a Venn diagram with the students on the similarities and differences between one-room schoolhouses and schools today.
3. Place newspaper in areas where students can work. Hand out the copies of the alphabet written in cursive. Have students work in groups and hand each group a couple of ink pens, ink and blank paper.
4. Have the students try to write the alphabet using the pens.
5. Discuss with the students what did they learn about using pens with inkwells compared to what they use today.
6. Instruct the students to create a drawing of a one-room schoolhouse, labeling sections of the room. Have the student write an essay, using the Venn diagram for information, comparing and contrasting the one-room schoolhouse and schools today.



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### **Guided Practice:**

Assist the students in using the ink pens and ink. Make sure the students have newspaper down in the area they are working and also you may want the students to bring in a work shirt to protect their clothes.

### **Independent Practice:**

Students will create a drawing of a one-room schoolhouse and write an essay comparing and contrasting the two different schools.

### **Extended Activities:**

1. Take the students to a local museum where there is an exhibit of a one-room schoolhouse. For an example the Agricultural museum in Stone Mills, New York has one on the grounds where the students can go in and sit in one of the classroom seats.

### **Web Sites:**

1. <http://www.coblrskill.edu/schools/mcs/csbest/school.htm>  
The web site gives a great summary on the history of one-room schoolhouses. The site also has photos students could look at to understand how the classroom was set up.
2. <http://www.teachermagazine.org/vol-08/06rose2.h08>  
The web site gives a brief description of the one-room schoolhouse.
3. <http://ad.doubleclick.net/adi/about.com/?sz=120x600;tile=3;ord=40076104437652744?>  
The web site is another site with a summary on one-room schoolhouse.

### **Resources:**

1. "The One-Room Schoolhouse", Paul Rocheleau, St. Martins Pr., Sept 2003, ISBN 0789310015
2. "Oral Life Histories of One-Room Schoolhouse Teachers: Voices From the Recitation Bench", Gretchen A. Duling, Edwin Mellen Press, June 1997, ISBN 0773442502

### **Children's Books:**

1. "Me and My One-Room Schoolhouse", Rita Reber Carney, Rita T. Carney, Jan 2000, ISBN 0967547504, ages 4-8
2. "If You Lived in Colonial Times", Ann McGovern, June Otani, Scholastic, May 1992, ISBN 059045160x, ages 9-12
3. "Colonial Days: Discover the Past With Fun Projects, Games, Activities, and Recipes: David C. King, Willey, Dec 1997, ISBN 0471161683, ages 9-12